

CITY CONFIDENCE MEN.

SHARPERS WHO THRIVE UPON THE CREDULITY OF OTHERS.

Rural People Their Usual Victims—How Confidence Is Established—Versatility of the Fine Worker—Snide Auctioneers and Their Swindling Scheme—A Strange Coincidence—Catching a Tartar—How a Bookkeeper Was Sold.



Half the world does not know how the other half lives. The above aphorism is used with-out quotation marks, not because it is claimed as original, but because it is of such "fatherly antiquity" as to render them entirely unnecessary.

Of the "half" which obtains its livelihood by means not understood by its complementary section, a respectable portion—in point of numbers—does so through methods extremely doubtful, if not decidedly knavish. In country places, where each is personally known to every



CONVINCING MR. OLIVER GREEN THAT HE WAS A FRIEND.

other, roguish genius finds a poor field for the display of his powers, and the knave is quickly marked as such and an embargo placed upon his operations. In consequence of this the rural rascal soon emigrates to the city, where his identity can be changed as opportunity or necessity requires.

From a "sharper" much may be learned of practical value to a thoroughly honest and conscientious man. It is, however, on the theory that evil must be understood that it may be avoided, that an expose of the modus operandi of sharpers, swindlers, confidence men—all the numerous fraternity of rogues who live by their wits, in fact—is rendered highly desirable.

Many readers will no doubt resent the imputation that such information could by any chance prove of service to them, believing that they "know a thing or two—or three," and, though country born and bred, can "take in" a great city, Chicago, for instance, without employing a personal guide, or carrying printed instructions. As the devil is said to gloat over the prospects presented by those who rely solely upon their own strength and righteousness, so the city sharper lies in wait for countrymen, "wise in their own conceit," whose arrival in town promises a large and, what is still more gratifying, an easily gathered harvest.

Country people are not behind the dwellers in cities, either in intelligence or sagacity; indeed, in both regards they no doubt excel the latter. They are easily victimized by the city "shark," because of their strange surroundings, the unfamiliar manners and customs of those with whom they come in contact, and their inability to comprehend the depravity to which human nature can descend, while at the same time maintaining a decidedly prepossessing appearance and most courtly address.

The plans by which people can be relieved of their money without resorting to the sand-bag or other forms of violence, are as various as the brains of the "con men" are fertile in imagination and invention.

It is this great variety of methods which entices and too frequently utterly discomfits the rural visitor. A well-dressed old gentleman will frequently stop him on the street and address him by the name of Thompson, learn that he is Oliver Green, of Greenville, apologizes for his mistake and passes on. A few minutes later he is hailed in his own proper name by a smooth confederate of the old gentleman, who, two times out of three, succeeds in convincing him that he has known his son at school, or his brother in Kansas, or even the visitor himself at Greenville. The particular scheme depends upon the circumstances of the case, especially the amount of information that has previously been secured. Confidence once



ESTABLISHED.

established, the sharper adroitly learns the manner of man he has to deal with. This determined, the rest is usually plain sailing. If the proposed victim drinks, which fact must be ascertained without making any "breaks," his money is as good as won already. A "tough" saloon is visited, and when the sight-seer comes to himself, often

enough in a police station, it is to mourn the loss of his money and watch. The "con man" is exceedingly versatile, and can furnish any information or render any service that the victim may request. Should the latter desire to "see the town," he acknowledges



A STRANGE COINCIDENCE.

himself to be a sport and takes him in tow, much as a tug-boat does a sailing vessel in the harbor, with the result of wrecking him on some reef, leaving him nothing of value to serve as salvage to whoever may come to his relief. If the stranger proves to be a church deacon, or even a clergyman, the "fine-worker" is not one whit abashed, but knows every preacher in the city, particularly the one his companion wishes to see, who is unfortunately out of town for the day. In the meantime another clergyman is often called on and machinery set in motion by which the visitor is relieved of his "roll."

Sometimes the smartest "con man" meets his match. Not long ago a veteran in the art of duplicity met a young granger in a Chicago street, apparently convinced him that he was an old friend of his dead brother, and steered him into a snide gambling-house. Once there, he treated the fare-dealer to liquor, with the result of producing his seeming intoxication. Then he won quite a sum from the bank, and induced Mr. Verdant to try his luck. As the latter displayed quite a large amount of money, he was allowed to win at first by way of encouraging him to increase his play.

In ten minutes he had won twice as many dollars.



INSIDE AUCTION-ROOM.

"I guess I'll be going," said he, as he pocketed the cash and rose to his feet.

"Don't think of it," remonstrated the "steerer." "You can make a thousand. It's as easy as lying."

"Then you'll be a sure winner. I'm not mean enough to beat my dead brother's friend out of the chance to make a fortune. Look out for him, though, for he might sober up any minute. I never saw such a rum-nosed fellow get so drunk on two drinks before. Go in and win. Twenty dollars will pay for my trip. I don't want the earth. Ta, ta."

Not long ago a wealthy Iowa farmer visited Chicago, and stopped at a Clark street hotel. The day after his arrival he spent an hour writing a business letter. He noticed a sleepy-looking individual who sat next to him, but had no idea that that individual had succeeded in reading every word he had written. Half an hour later he stopped before a street mail box to deposit his epistle. As he raised it to the office his hand encountered that of a well-dressed man who was engaged in a similar undertaking. Then the farmer uttered a little exclamation of surprise, the name and address on the two envelopes being identical.

"Excuse me," said he, "but this is a strange coincidence. You seem to know Prof. Orville Hartshorn, of Denver."

"Intimately," responded the stranger. "I have just arrived from the West to represent him in the negotiation of a block of mining stock which a friend of his, Mr. John Newton, thought of buying."

"I'm the very man! Give me your hand! Strangest coincidence I ever saw! The Professor wrote me that a friend would represent him here."

The identification seemed complete, and before night the farmer had exchanged \$5,000 in money for entirely worthless stock.

In these days swindling has been reduced to a fine art, confidence men often making elaborate preparations, and that at no small expense, to discover and properly receive rural visitors.

Last spring a well-to-do druggist, located in a thriving town of central Illinois, started for Chicago. On the train he fell into conversation with a very gentlemanly appearing man—in reality a sharper—who soon learned that he was going to the city at the call of Blank & Smith, a prominent and reputable real estate firm. He wished to invest a few thousands in real estate, and so took advantage of the World's Fair boom in prices, and

the firm had advised him that they had a rare opening for cash.

The "gentlemanly stranger" soon left the train, and lost no time in sending a long dispatch to his partner in the city. Upon his arrival there the druggist was met at the depot by a young man who had no difficulty in convincing him that he was the confidential clerk of Messrs. Blank & Smith, whose card he presented, together with a forged note on one of their letter-heads, informing him that they had sent their clerk to meet him, as the matter must be closed immediately, or the best chance in Chicago be lost.

The unsuspecting dispenser of drugs entered a hack with the false clerk and was driven to a handsome piece of acre property, where he met the supposed owner. Satisfied with the price and that the title was good, he signed the contract on the spot, advancing \$1,000 to secure the purchase.

The above instance is only one of many which might be cited, where schrewd men, familiar with business transactions, have been duped by sharpers.

Mock or fraudulent actions have always been a prolific source of revenue to the city sharper. A room is secured on a business street, and a



"I DON'T WANT THE EARTH."

loud-voiced auctioneer placed in command of the situation. Seemingly fine watches and jewelry are sold at various prices. It is unnecessary to state that these goods are "snide," or, if genuine, are knocked down to a confederate.



PRESENTING BILL FOR CIGARS.

Often fine goods are offered for inspection, put up even for sale; a base imitation substituted when they are wrapped up for delivery. Many an unsuspecting countryman, having made a bid, has goods struck off to him and several times the amount of his offer demanded. Upon demurring and protesting he is threatened with



ARREST, AND IS OFTEN BROUGHT TO TERMS.

Of course the swindlers use judgment in selecting the victim of such a high-handed proceeding.

"This racket stole the racket, I suppose. No matter if the fellow is a knave. Provided that the racket shaves."

These lines, from Dr. Wolcott's "Razor Seller," will serve to largely explain the success of the fraudulent auctioneer. The buyer generally supposes that the seller has come dishonestly by the goods he is slaughtering, and is hence eager to share in the profits, without incurring either the odium or legal consequences of the theft. Sometimes the information is given out by the confederates that a descent of the police is feared, and that sales are being rushed on that account. Then business becomes rushing, and no end of fraud is perpetrated in the confusion. Cigars are often sold in this way. Six or seven boxes are put up at a time and knocked down at about one-half their real value. As the goods cannot be delivered during the sale, a liberal deposit is required on each lot. When the entire stock has been disposed of the purchasers, who have been felicitating themselves on their rare good fortune, are astonished and discomfited at receiving a bill in which the price bid is charged at so much a box, instead of for the entire lot, as they had understood. That being the established rule of such sales and the cigars not being worth the amount, they simply lose their deposit money and resolve to eschew snide auctions

and stolen or smuggled goods in the future.

"Partner wanted in well-established real estate and brokerage business: \$8,000 profits last year. Rare chance for an energetic man. Z. 58."

Such advertisements may be seen



"MY MONEY OR YOUR LIFE."

any day and every day in the Chicago papers. Some of them are no doubt legitimate, but for the most part they are decidedly "snide." A tolerably well-furnished office, a formidable set of books, in which are entered the description and terms of sale of a large amount of city and country real estate, which has been picked up here and there without the smallest authority from the owners or agents, and numerous equally delusive applications for large loans and "gilt-edged" security; these, together with a respectable-looking, smooth-talking old man and two or three "stool pigeons," who dart in at critical points during the negotiation with a "snicker" to accept imaginary offers and make imaginary loans, constitute the "well-established business" offered for sale.

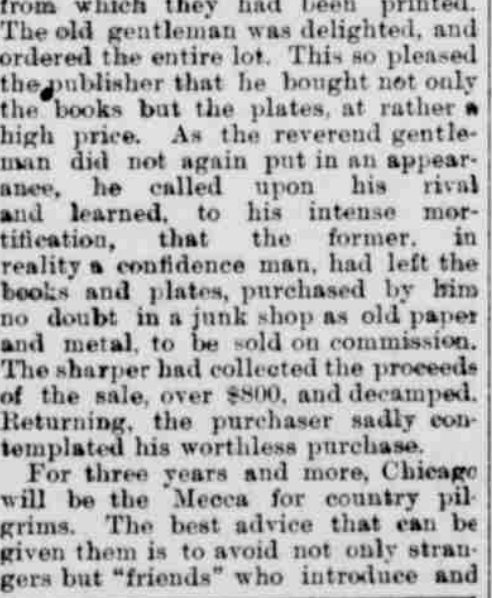
This scheme has been so frequently exposed by the daily press that native game has become "timid" and difficult to "bag." Hence most of the victims are now secured from the country, where the Chicago papers have a very general circulation. The price for an interest varies with the ability to pay of the party to be swindled. Once secured, the new "partner" is systematically "frozen out," that is, after various schemes have been played upon him and all his surplus cash secured. One man in Madison street "takes in," on an average, a partner a month. Frequently the swindled parties join the enterprise and get even by finding a new man with money to buy them out, or take a third interest in the "rapidly growing business."

Sometimes a "turtar" is caught. Not long ago a prominent "operator" in this line of swindling "took in" a young man from Western Illinois. The latter found out his "mistake" the very next day. Having locked the door he rested a revolver across a pile of the firm's "books," the better to insure his aim, and made the following demand upon his urbane partner: "My money or your life!"

This variation from the stereotyped request of the typical highwayman produced the desired effect. His \$500 was returned and a new victim sought. As before stated, business men, thoroughly "up to snuff" are often taken in by slick confidence operators. One of the leading publishers and booksellers of New York was once swindled in the following unique manner:

A clerical-looking old gentleman called one day, and presented a card which designated him as the President of a Western college. He stated that he desired to purchase several thousand volumes for the college library, and a complete set of text-books for a new department of theology. After spending a week in examining books, he made out a large order. The one thing he lacked was a particular Hebrew grammar which he had studied in his youth, and upon which he had set his heart. The firm did not have it, but sent out a clerk who found, in a rival establishment, an edition of several hundred volumes and the plates from which they had been printed. The old gentleman was delighted, and ordered the entire lot. This so pleased the publisher that he bought not only the books but the plates, at rather a high price. As the reverend gentleman did not again put in an appearance, he called upon his rival and learned, to his intense mortification, that the former, in reality a confidence man, had left the books and plates, purchased by him no doubt in a junk shop as old paper and metal, to be sold on commission. The sharper had collected the proceeds of the sale, over \$800, and decamped. Returning, the purchaser sadly contemplated his worthless purchase.

For three years and more, Chicago will be the Mecca for country pilgrims. The best advice that can be given them is to avoid not only strangers but "friends" who introduce and



THE PUBLISHER SADLY CONTEMPLATED HIS WORTHLESS PURCHASE.

identify themselves in strange and unexpected ways.

DWIGHT BALDWIN.

CHICAGO, ILL.

"O, mamma!" shuddered a little girl, as she was being bathed one morning, and shrank from the water on her chest. "Don't put water there. It hurts my front back so!"

THEY TOOK AN OUTING.

HOW LABOR'S GREAT HOLIDAY WAS CELEBRATED.

The Workmen of Chicago Lay Aside Their Tools on One Day of the Year and Go Out to Make Merry in the Streets and Parks—A Great Procession.

[Chicago dispatch.] A day especially reserved for the American workman to march out on the highways and, as it were, exclaim: "We are the people!" has a fixed place in the calendar of this big town of workmen. Public offices close, school does not keep, sixteen feet of stars and stripes are flung from the flag-staff on the City Hall.

Nobody labors on Labor Day—nobody to amount to anything. The streets, the parks and the newspapers are given over for once to the man with the strong hands and the sweating brow. And he takes them proudly and just barely says: "Thank you." They belonged to him before, says he, but he only cares to use them once a year.

Yesterday's demonstration was not so boastful as previous labor parades have been. The banners were a trifle more modest and less inclination was shown to bump into men with plug hats on the corner.

There were 8,740 men in line, and perhaps they had good reason to feel proud, but the people who watched the line drawn like a cable through a sheathing of spectators ten feet thick on Jackson street were astonished, not so much by the size of the procession, for 8,740 men is not a drop in the veins of this place, as by the evidence that half the thousands of men and women who cheered on the marchers themselves belonged to the organizations represented in the parade.

The tramp began at Lake-Front Park. Not long after daybreak the bands were playing and young men in the stunning clothes a Chicago workman loves to don once in a while could be met on any downtown street plodding over to the rendezvous from the West and North Sides. At 10 o'clock the park was jammed from the Illinois Central fence to Michigan avenue with a crowd in which no man was capable of individual motion. It surged to and fro as if it were set on rollers, and when it moved forward it went with a huge lunge that drove a handful of boulevard policeman flying before it. All one could see of the throng was a vision of the printers' stove-pipe hats and a hundred transparencies waving around them.

The crowd took the jam good-naturedly enough and the women were noticeably jolly about it, and no wonder. They were the best dressed women that ever fell into a hurly-burly throng. The men gave way to them and allowed them to occupy the parquet seats on the curb. A tall girl with a blue hat received almost an ovation near Wabash avenue when the plumbers tramped down Jackson street. They all knew her, evidently, and when she waved her handkerchief at them a chorus of "Why, hi—ho, Nellie!" went up and the plumbers stopped to shake hands with her until the machinery men bumped into them.

The procession started about 11:30 o'clock, and for two hours it wound through the streets. For an hour after the boomety-boom-boom of the bass drum sounded it seemed that the procession would be interminable. The people were so thick on the street that they left only a narrow alley for the men to march through. It was so narrow when a sudden movement caused a bulge in the walls that marching by fours became almost impossible, and most of the organizations were compelled to form in threes or twos. At times the line became so thin that it looked like a bright thread in the black blanket covering the street.

There was a pleasant incident connected with the arrival of the carpenters' house in the line. A young man wearing a blue badge tried to stop it and quarreled with the driver. While his friends were holding him the driver slipped up and got in line. The young man followed with the intention of slugging the driver, but he fell in with some marching carpenters, and, while he was talking to them, a large man stepped down from the back stoop of the house and batted this aggressive person on the nose. Then he went back into the house and the young man withdrew, bleeding unpleasantly.

This was only an incident, though, and a rare one. The procession was unusually jolly and it banded jokes with its friends along the line.

"Why don't ye boys wear yer coats when yez appears in public?" shouted a voice from the crowd as the molders went by.

"If ye'll glimme back the way ye'er father stole from moine, O'll wear that," replied a big molder who was kept at bay.

"Rats" was also treated with a lot of chaff. "Rats" is the plumber's boy, and he was proud of the distinction of wearing white gloves and marching behind the great Second Regiment Band. But it took the pride out of him to hear a roar at every block: "Rats, are you with me? Fifty dollars for pipe." "Rats" marched on heedless, though, and he was one of the effective features of the great turnout. Everywhere the parade was cheered and everywhere the streets were choked with its admirers. Sailing through the streets of the North and South Sides it took its punishment of the dust and heat with a grinning face and declared, as has been remarked before, with a roar that could be heard across the lake: "We are the people!" They were.

Items of Interest.

TEN ordinary eggs will weigh a pound. BILLIARD cloth makes the driest case for a banjo.

LAND is 300 times as valuable now as it was 200 years ago.

AN old crook found buried at York contained the body of a child.

THIRTEEN cantaloupes raised by a farmer near Bridgeton, N. J., filled a barrel.

SEVEN out of every eight loaves of bread eaten in London are made from foreign wheat.

THERE is a threatened decrease in the rent of flats in New York, because of their multiplicity.

DEVICES for saving ice are in demand. There is nothing better than wrapping it in newspapers.

A SIGN over a clothing house in the New York Bowery bears the appropriate title, "Taylor, Cutter & Co."

ROTEX and HAVE are making great efforts to prevent Paris from becoming a seaport by the deepening of the channel of the River Seine. These flourishing seaports realize that their trade would be gone if Paris should become a port.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

SERIOUS SUBJECTS CAREFULLY CONSIDERED.

A Scholarly Exposition of the Lesson—Thoughts Worthy of Calm Reflection—Half an Hour's Study of the Scriptures—Time Well Spent.

The lesson for Sunday, Sept. 14, may be found in Luke 19: 11-27.

INTRODUCTION. We have here another of our Lord's vivid narratives, a parable, as we see, suggested by historical incidents of current interest. How well the story was told that little parenthesis intimates to the reader's perusal: "My God, he is lost!" Or that abrupt, neighborly salutation in the midst of the narrative. We are reminded of that exclamation from the midst of Whitefield's audience, in his graphic delineation of the sinner's peril: "My God, he is lost!" Or that abrupt, neighborly salutation in the little English chapel, where the preacher was rudely but vividly describing Goliath's overthrow: "That's right, Billy; now hold with 'em!" It indicated marked power of delineation. We can understand why the common people heard him gladly.

WHAT THE LESSON SAYS. As they heard these things. The words spoken in connection with Zacchaeus' conversion.—He added and spoke. Or, as we should say, He went on to give a parable. The parable illustrates a truth incidentally suggested in the previous incident, namely: that God calls for a consecration of all man's possessions to His service.—Because He was high to Jerusalem. Another occasion of the parable was the eager but erroneous expectation of the people in a temporal kingdom, that grew stronger as the time neared the royal city.—Kingdom of God. Properly understood, the reign of God in the heart; so interpreted by John and the prophets.—To appear. Literally, come to light (anaphora).

A certain nobleman. More accurately, a certain man of high birth.—Into a far country. Where the seat of government may be supposed to be.—To receive for himself a kingdom, or largely authority, i. e., to be formally confirmed in royal power, as was necessary for high princes and governors. It is interesting to note, as perhaps suggesting this story, that Herod and Archelaus, his son, did about this time, according to Josephus, go on such an expedition to Rome, a protecting embassy being sent after them to Caesar.

His ten servants, or rather, ten servants of his, implying the possession of a large estate.—Ten pounds, or rather, ten hundred drachmae, equivalent to between twenty and twenty-five dollars—no small sum in that day.—Occupy. Literally, trade or do business (from *pragmata*, deed).—Till I come. Of the nature of a loan. They were but stewards.

Behold, here is thy pound. The literal is more expressive and barely so. Lord, behold thy pound. As much as to say, There, Lord, is your pound.—Which I had. To be separated from what comes after.—Laid up in a napkin. Descriptive of the way he had it.

I feared thee. Absurd! why not then obey him?—Our Lord is here, and is but emphasizing the exceeding folly of such conduct and such excuses.—Take up. Extortion.—What thou didst not see. Exaction.

WHAT THE LESSON TEACHES. Because he was high to Jerusalem. We are never far from it. The spiritual Jerusalem is at the center of all life, its clean spires are just beyond at every great movement in history. Christ has a part in all the world's living. The name of a certain artist was so woven and interwoven into the *Slav* work about a statue that you could not obliterate the name without destroying the work. God's line is come out through all the earth. Always Jesus is the center and the sacred city is not far from our hearts of trade and our temples of learning.

They thought that the Kingdom of God should immediately appear. And lo! it appeared. There was Jesus in their midst. What more did they need? Here is Jesus in our midst, what more need we? And yet we are prone to look for some particular appearing, some great overturning or revolution. But it cometh not with observation. The Kingdom of God is within you. Now here we are on the further edge of the heated term. We are scarcely looking for the Kingdom just now, perhaps a few months later, and we are expecting special demonstrations of the Lord's power. And so like those disciples of old we are inclined to wait for that great event. Our Lord rebukes us now, as he did his servants then. We are working in the world, and the time. It is a matter of every day duty. "Say not—four months. Lift up your eyes and look on the fields."

To receive for himself a kingdom. It is, in an important sense, the present duty. "The crowning day is coming by and by." The Kingdoms of this world have already been given to Christ, but their formal and open transfer has not yet been made. The world has not yet acknowledged the Christ's sway. But the time is coming when it shall do so. And, in the meantime, the Church of Christ is to go forward accepting Christ's kingship in faith, using the world as his, and occupying it in his name, as always in his name and expecting his coming. Any say that Gen. Custer threw his arm about Gen. Sheridan's neck at Winchester, can believe it. The leader came at a time when he was greatly needed, and those who had been endeavoring to occupy will be came were hard pressed. Well, some time the Captain of our salvation will come in sight. Shall we be found holding our posts loyally and acknowledging the Christ's duty. Occupy till I come! Here is the present duty. We are to employ the opportunities given us as unto the Lord. Our part in this Kingdom is to do business for the Master. For that is what the word *occupy* means, trade with traffic. What a different conception this gives to the life that now is! It is no empty, fruitless time of waiting. It is an important part of the Kingdom. And God will judge us as our estimate of the good time coming by the way in which we use the working moments that are upon us to-day. How are you using the time? What are you doing to help make the King's return glorious? If you care for his coming, you will occupy till he comes.

Unto every one which hath shall be given. And we were supposing that man's accumulations counted for nothing. They count for nothing so far as salvation is concerned; but as regards present life in the Kingdom, it is altogether otherwise. Nothing is lost there, nothing is unaccounted for. When we come to God for grace we come in as we want, saying, "Nothing in my hands I bring, and we receive the grace in our emptiness. But when the Kingdom has at last been received and we approach the king for our station and rank, we come every one of us laden with sheaves and with the wicks that do follow us. What shall we have? What increase have you wrought in the Kingdom of grace? The Kingdom of glory shall be yours accordingly. Little here, little there; much here, much there.

Next Lesson—"Jesus Entering Jerusalem."—Luke 19: 27-48.

THOMSON—I generally carry an umbrella when it looks like rain. Sampson—You likewise carry one when it doesn't look like rain. You carried one away from my house the other day when there wasn't a cloud in the sky.

"Hello, Mudd!" cried a countryman, saluting a former neighbor. "Hush! Don't speak so loud!" said the other. "Since coming to town, I have changed my name to Myer, in deference to my wife's feelings."